

Section III. Evaluation and Case Study County Surveys

Evaluation

Prefabricated property types have had an impact on the built environment and remain important links to American social and cultural history of twentieth century domestic architecture. Prefab housing provided one solution for the nation's housing needs. Prefab manufacturers attempted to create an affordable and easy-to-construct house form through industrialized methods. Prefab housing represented new building and design innovations that were developed in the early and mid-twentieth century. Prefabricated housing also reflected the inherent values of modern living in the early and mid-twentieth century. Prefabricated housing occupies a significant role in twentieth century domestic architectural history.

Establishing the value of prefab houses within this historic context is critical to establish their historic significance. The choice of prefab housing was generally tied to larger cultural phenomenon like the development of a certain industry, a sudden influx in population, or a popular architectural style. In considering the significance of prefabricated housing, the evaluation of a prefabricated resource must be considered in either a local, state, or national context.

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) provides a framework to evaluate the significance of historic and cultural resources. By establishing an historic context for a resource, the researcher can establish a concrete argument for significance. This process aids preservation planning and helps to make cultural resource management decisions. There are four established criteria by which an historic resource can be evaluated.

- A. Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. Association with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent a work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. Yielded, or may likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history.¹



In order to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, a resource only needs to satisfy one of these criteria. In most cases, prefabricated housing would be evaluated for eligibility under Criterion A for its association with broad patterns related to community development, social history, or industrial growth. In cases where prefab houses were constructed for worker housing, a context for the association with a particular company or industry in a community could be developed. Under Criterion C, the property's association with a particular design or construction method from a prefab manufacturer would be developed within an historic context.

Once a criterion for evaluation has been established, an historic context for a resource or district will be placed within an area of significance and compared with similar resources. David L. Ames and Linda Flint McClelland explain the application of areas of significance this way: "Area of significance is that aspect of history in which a historic property through design, use, physical characteristics, or association influenced the history, and identity of a local area, region, State, or the Nation." For prefabricated houses, likely areas of significance will relate to community planning and development, industry, social history, transportation, engineering, or architecture.²

The researcher should consider all possible contexts to determine significance for a property. In dealing with mass-produced resources, careful consideration must be given to both the significance and integrity of a particular resource or group of resources. Some prefab resources will not possess clear significance or retain enough integrity to be considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Prefab resources that have value within a larger context related to an event, such as the development of affordable housing within an area or as important example of prefabricated construction and design technology, and that have sufficient integrity will have higher likelihood of being considered eligible. Additionally, some prefabs may not be eligible individually and may only be considered as eligible as part of a district.

Integrity Considerations

Once the historic context has been identified for a prefabricated resource, an assessment of integrity must be undertaken. The integrity of a resource expresses the historic significance of a property through these seven elements. It is through this lens that a historic resource can convey its meaning in our cultural history. Buildings do

change over time with additions and alterations. Some additions and alterations are more sympathetic than others. Identifying the character-defining elements both tangible and intangible are important in assessing the inherent integrity of a resource. Once a threshold of integrity can be determined for a particular property type, a resource can be evaluated within this framework.

It is important to remember that assessing integrity of these resources is a balancing act. While some prefabs might lose integrity through window replacement, especially if the evaluation was done under Criterion C only, and the area of significance had a strong relationship with integrity of materials, it would be unlikely that one element of integrity would blunt a resource's eligibility. Instead, both Criterion A and C should be looked at when assessing a prefab and all elements of integrity must be weighed with relation to their importance to the area of significance.

In a Criterion A nomination, a prefabricated house should have a medium-to-high value placed on integrity of **design, workmanship, materials, location, feeling, and association**. Lower levels of integrity are acceptable for **setting**. To be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, a prefab property type should have a high level of **design, workmanship, and materials**. Medium-to-high weight should be placed on integrity of **location, feeling, and association**. **Setting** can be altered without harming a prefab's ability to represent its significance.

In terms of **design**, the prefabricated house was constructed from specific plans designed by company architects. The integrity of design is directly related to the industrial process within the prefab house manufacture. Though there could be some customization of floor plan initially, the general footprint (form), floor plan, and style of the house should not have been changed. In the case of *panelized* prefabs that were generally conceived of as starter homes, the original form was relatively compact. Inappropriate additions that are unsympathetic in scale or materials could impact eligibility, especially if the overall building footprint is subsumed among additions.

Materials are also important to the integrity of a prefab house. Standardized lumber, windows, doors, and trim are essential to the construction of a *precut* house. The modular panels, windows, doors and trim are essential to the construction of a *panelized, sectional, or preassembled* houses. Replacement windows could impact integrity of materials. For example, Gunnison houses originally had steel casement windows, which reflect an industrial charac-

ter. Two-over-two wooden windows would therefore be inappropriate for Gunnison housing. Since it was not uncommon for *panelized*, *sectional*, or *preassembled* houses to be sheathed with shingles or siding, replacement cladding will not impact integrity, as long as it does not diverge greatly from the look of the original cladding and follows the general form of the original cladding materials. Siding that covers original architectural detailing would impact integrity. Removal, replacement, or alterations to original fabric could impact the ability of the property to convey historic significance.

Workmanship is especially important to a prefab building's effort to convey significance. Workmanship is traditionally thought of as the work of a master craftsman. However, the National Register defines workmanship this way:

The physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory...It can be based on common traditions or innovative period techniques.

Workmanship is important because it can furnish evidence of the technology of a craft, illustrate the aesthetic principles of a historic or prehistoric period, and reveal individual, local, regional, or national applications of both technological practices and aesthetic principles.³

It is obvious that workmanship is a very important element of integrity for factory-produced houses. In the case of prefabs, the craft of the time that truly reflects innovative techniques and the culture of the twentieth century would have to be produced in a factory. Prefab houses should display standardization of the construction technique for them to be eligible. For example, a Aladdin home should have its characteristic factory produced trim and standardized lumber to convey that it is a prefab factory produced house and a Lustron should have its factory produced porcelain enamel exterior tiles to meet integrity standards.

Integrity of **location** is key to relating the property to its historic context. The original location of the property places it in the appropriate context, whether built in an early or mid-twentieth century suburb or as a part of a company town. Prefabricated houses should not have been moved. In cases where a prefab house was relocated, it must either demonstrate exceptional architectural value and retain integrity of design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association; or it must be demonstrated to be the only surviving property most

importantly associated with a particular historic event or an important aspect of a historic person's life. For more information about nominating or evaluating moved properties, see the Criterion Consideration B for Moved Properties online at http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15_7.htm#crit%20con%20b

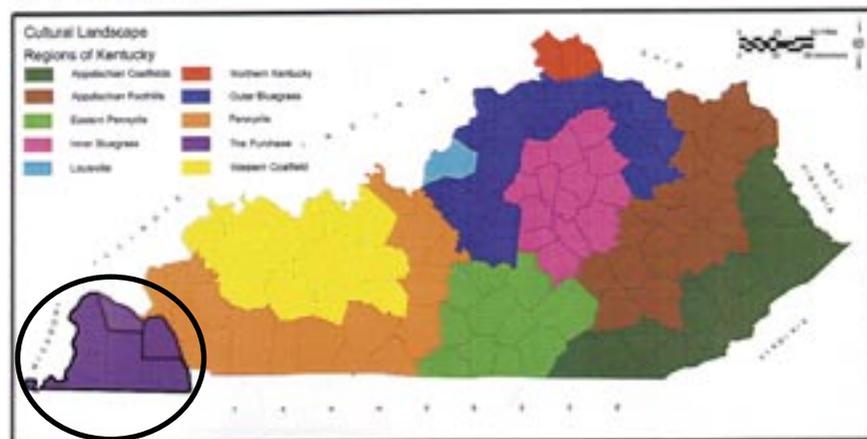
The **Setting** for a prefab house is also germane to integrity considerations. Given that prefabricated houses were used as dwellings, a sufficient amount of residential context should still remain with the property. Prefab houses could be found in urban, suburban, or rural settings. The key to evaluating integrity of setting is that the property should convey a sense of residential use. This level of integrity, while important, would not necessarily need to be intact for a prefab to be considered significant.

Prefabricated houses possess intangible qualities of **feeling** and **association**. These elements of integrity convey information about the time, place, and culture in which the prefab house was developed. The inherent qualities of a prefabricated house include style, form, workmanship, and detailing. Though difficult to quantify, integrity of feeling and association should relate the historic context that is developed for the property. If sufficient levels of design, workmanship, materials, and location are present, then feeling and association will have to remain with the property in question.

Now that the preliminary criteria and integrity considerations have been identified for prefabricated housing, the application of these registration requirements can be examined. In particular, panelized prefab house types located in Paducah will be examined, in order to demonstrate a sample integrity evaluation and eligibility processes for prefab housing. This section appears directly before the summary of field work in the Paducah area. Regrettably, other prefab house types were not found and confirmed in sufficient numbers in the field to permit model National Register evaluations. Much more intensive field work should be done to develop model evaluations on precut, sectional, and preassembled prefab property types. At this time, only generalized conclusions can be made from primary and secondary archival sources and from evaluation of a very small number examined in the field. The following sections will also explore potential historic contexts that could form the basis for significance for prefab historic resources.

Jackson Purchase Cultural Landscape Region

The Jackson Purchase is located in the western most part of the state of Kentucky. This region is bounded by the Mississippi, Ohio, and Tennessee Rivers as well as the Land Between the Lakes area. It was technically part of Kentucky at its statehood in 1792, but did not come under definitive U.S. control until it was purchased from the Chicksaw Indians by Andrew Jackson in 1818. Kentuckians generally refer to this region as “the Purchase.”⁴ Although Jackson’s purchase also included all of Tennessee west of the Tennessee River, the term *Jackson Purchase* is used only to refer to the Kentucky portion of the acquisition; the Tennessee region directly to the south is typically called West Tennessee.⁵



Map of Kentucky's Cultural Landscape Regions. The Jackson Purchase region is outlined by the black circle. (Source: "A Cultural Historic Survey of the Proposed Telecommunication Tower Site West of Future City, McCracken County, Kentucky)."

The Jackson Purchase Cultural Landscape Region was formally recognized by the Kentucky Heritage Council as a planning unit to study historic themes and develop preservation contexts. The Jackson Purchase Cultural Landscape consists of eight counties including: Ballard, Calloway, Carlisle, Fulton, Graves, Hickman, Marshall, and McCracken.⁶ The largest city and main economic center, Paducah, has approximately 30,000 residents. Only two other towns in the region, Murray and Mayfield, have more than 5,000 residents.⁷

Geologically, the Purchase area is part of the Mississippi Delta. This region of Kentucky contains some of the richest agricultural lands, with the production of dark-leaf tobacco dominating the area in the early and mid-twentieth century. The population in the region

was generally rural except for the county-seat towns. Paducah took on the role as regional capital, since it had developed as a distribution center for the region's products. Postwar industrialization in the late 1940s and 1950s created a new economic base, especially in McCracken and Marshall counties. The new industries associated with the Atomic Energy Commission's (AEC) Gaseous Diffusion Plant near Paducah were powered by the Tennessee Valley Authority's Kentucky Dam.⁸ Allied industries involved in chemical production located along the Ohio River near Calvert City. This new industrialization of the region drew more people to the area in search of employment after World War II.⁹ Tourism and recreation is also an important industry in the Purchase that developed during the mid-twentieth century. Boating and camping became popular tourist activities, centering largely on the Tennessee Valley Authority-created Kentucky Lake, which now forms most of the Purchase's eastern border, and Lake Barkley a few miles to the east.¹⁰

The counties of the Jackson Purchase including Ballard, Calloway, Carlisle, Fulton, Graves, Hickman, McCracken, and Marshall contain prefabricated housing property types, given their proximity to regional prefab manufacturers' factories. Sears's factory in Cairo, Illinois, was located across the Mississippi River near Wickliffe. The counties of the Jackson Purchase were also well within the distribution range of prefab companies like Gunnison Homes in New Albany, Indiana and National Homes in Lafayette, Indiana. For the purposes of this study, resources located in McCracken and Marshall counties served as case study examples for the documentation of prefabricated houses in the Jackson Purchase Cultural Landscape region. Those resources encountered provided the study's examples of prefab houses in urban, suburban, and rural contexts. Project staff conducted fieldwork in these counties to survey associated properties in February and March 2006.

McCracken County

McCracken County was formed in 1825 and joined the Commonwealth of Kentucky as seventy-eighth county. The county is named for Captain Virgil McCracken, who was killed at the Battle of Raisin during the War of 1812. The county is located at the confluence of the Tennessee and Ohio rivers in the Jackson Purchase region and contains 251 square miles. Paducah is the primary city of the region and the county seat.¹¹

Paducah, named and laid out by explorer William Clark, was established in 1827 on a tract of land owned by the Clark family. In 1831, it replaced the town of Wilmington as the county seat.¹² Although it developed later than other communities in the region, Paducah grew rapidly because of its access to the Ohio and Tennessee rivers. Town trustees realized the city's strategic trading location and used public money to improve the wharf. Paducah developed into a thriving river port as the shipping point of tobacco from the region.¹³ Manufacturing industries also developed as Paducah's role as a river town increased. Paducah's exports included dressed lumber, barrel staves, railroad ties, flour, meal, and tobacco twists and plugs. In 1860, Paducah had reached the status of Kentucky's fifth largest manufacturing center. By the turn of the century, the town had risen to the second largest manufacturing and distribution center in the state.¹⁴

Paducah's rise in trade dominance benefited from the development of the railroads. In 1850, the Federal Government granted land to the Illinois Central Railroad for the completion of a line to Cairo, Illinois. At the same time, the Mobile and Ohio Railroad that connected the Gulf of Mexico by rail to the Great Lakes was also granted land. The northern terminus was located in west Kentucky, near Paducah. City officials developed a way to connect the two systems with a 60-mile railroad.¹⁵

Paducah flourished as a center of river and railroad trade; the town grew rapidly, attracting investors and workers alike. In 1850, the city had 2,428 residents within its boundar-



1959 General Highway Map of McCracken County. (Source: Kentucky Transportation Cabinet).

ies. The first expansion from the original town plat occurred in 1856, when city trustees approved three additions, increasing the city's boundaries to 96 blocks.¹⁶ The city had a substantial African American population, which reached a total of 547 by 1860. By 1880, Paducah's African American population accounted for 32.3% of the city's total residents.¹⁷ At the turn of the century, the city's total population had increased by ten times, to 20,000 residents. Paducah achieved the status of a second-class city by 1901.¹⁸

Paducah's manufacturing base continued to be healthy at the turn of the century, with 150 locally owned factories, mills, and wholesalers. The establishment of the Illinois Central Railroad shops in 1927 represented Paducah's first major industrial expansion in the twentieth century. The plant was built to accommodate locomotive manufacture, repair, and maintenance. The 38-acre plant was one of the largest such facilities in the nation.¹⁹ The company employed 5,000 workers and contributed significantly to the local economy.²⁰

McCracken County's prosperity also benefited higher learning in the area. In 1909, D.H. and Artelia Anderson opened the West Kentucky Industrial College in Paducah. This educational facility prepared young African Americans to teach in black common or public schools. In 1918, the institution received state funding because of the region's isolation from Frankfort's Normal School. The legislature merged the school with the Kentucky State College for Negroes in 1938, creating a four-year institution in Frankfort. The West Kentucky Industrial College converted into a post-secondary vocational school located near Rowlandtown in Paducah. The Paducah Junior College, which served the white students started as a private institution in 1932. The city provided funding four years later and the school became public. In 1968, the institution was absorbed into the University of Kentucky's community college system.²¹

Further boosting of the county's economy occurred in the 1940s and 1950s. The Kentucky Ordnance Works (KOW) was constructed in McCracken County during World War II. The KOW was located on 16,000 acres approximately sixteen miles from Paducah.



Paducah's city limits were still pretty compact by 1940. The city's boundaries would expand during the 1950s. (Source: United States Department of the Interior USGS Map, "Paducah Quadrangle," 1940).



Paducah proudly featured its status as the "Atomic City" once the Gaseous Diffusion Plant started operations near the city. (Source: Private Collection).

This plant produced Trinitrotoluene (TNT) for the U.S. war effort.²² In 1944, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) completed the Kentucky Dam on the Tennessee River for hydroelectric power and to prevent flooding that was so pervasive in the region.²³

Following the war, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) constructed its Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant (PGDP) in McCracken County because of the availability of cheap energy

produced by the hydroelectric facility at the Kentucky Dam.²⁴ Constructed on the former site of the Kentucky Ordnance Plant, the PDGP was opened in 1952 as a uranium enrichment plant for the production of nuclear weapons.²⁵ On January 6, 1951, the Tennessee Valley Authority began construction of the four-unit Shawnee Steam Plant near the Paducah Plant on the Ohio River to provide a portion of the needed electricity. On February 15, 1951, Electric Energy, Incorporated began construction of the Joppa Steam Plant, in Joppa, Illinois, to also provide electricity to PGDP.²⁶

Demand for enriched uranium created by the Cold War spurred an economic and population boom for the area. The PGDP brought 1,600 permanent jobs and 20,000 construction jobs to McCracken County.²⁷ Between 1950 and 1960, the population increased from 49,137 to 57,306, most of which lived in Paducah and Lone Oak, a suburban community just south of the city.²⁸ As a result of this dramatic increase in residents, an acute housing shortage



Map showing proximity of PGDP to Paducah. The plant is in the center of the illustration and Paducah is to the right. (Source: "Cultural Resource Survey and National Register Assessment C140 Complex Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant McCracken County, Kentucky").



Inside the PDGP plant. The massive influx of workers for this plant and allied industries created a population boom in Paducah. (Source: "Cultural Resource Survey and National Register Assessment C140 Complex Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant McCracken County, Kentucky").

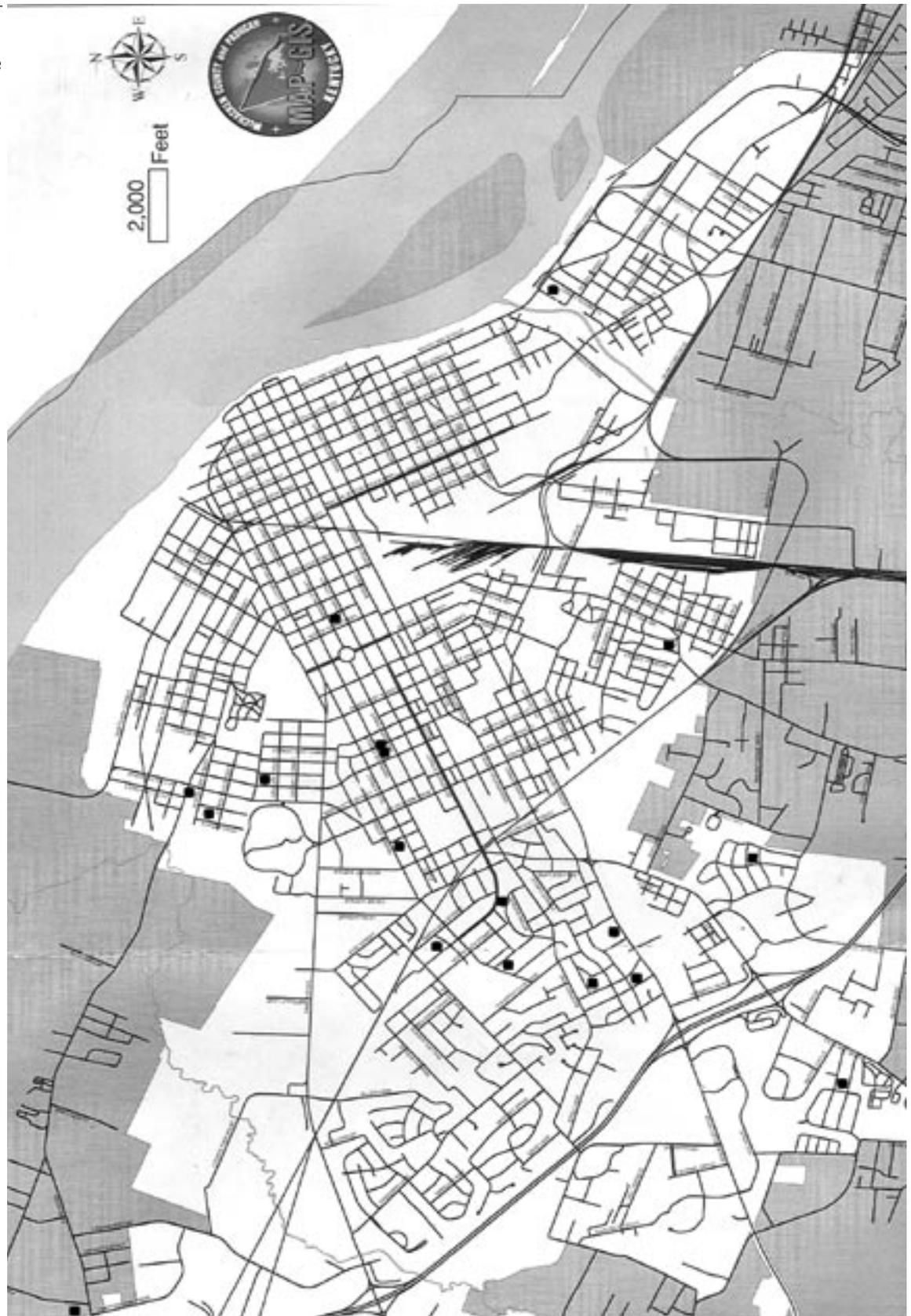
became apparent. The AEC quickly constructed a 1,000-room temporary barracks to remedy the situation in the short term. The AEC, then financially backed a 300-apartment unit at Elmwood Court, 100 units at Anderson Court, and 162 houses in the River

Oaks subdivision. The Federal Housing Authority (FHA), a federal government agency, recognized the need for increased housing stock created by the presence of the PGDP, and soon provided funding for 500 units at Forest Hills, 128 at Fair Oaks, 76 units at California Court, and 76 units at Paducah Apartments.²⁹ With the growing need for housing, prefabricated house dealers opened businesses in Paducah. At least six prefab dealers were listed in Paducah by 1952 though the manufacturers that they represented were not identified.

Paducah Prefab Dealers
K-M Distributors, Inc., 111 N. 6 th Street, Paducah, Kentucky Robert Mattingly, Inc., Route 6, Lone Oak Road, Paducah, Kentucky
New House Constructors, Inc., Taylor Building, Paducah, Kentucky
South Side Homes, 2025 S. 28 th Street, Paducah, Kentucky
Roe Wilkins, St. John Road, Paducah, Kentucky
Woodland Homes Company, 742 Thompson Avenue, Paducah, Kentucky ³⁰

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, McCracken County's pre-1939 housing stock contained 3,576 units or 11.8% of its total residential inventory. For the period encompassing 1940 to 1959, the total amount of housing units represented is 7,566 or 24.9% of the county's total housing stock.³¹ This period represents Paducah's largest growth in housing, which coincides with the development of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission's gaseous diffusion plant in 1951. The PGDP and other support industries located in the area bolstered the expansion of Paducah's workforce during the 1950s.³²

Right: Map showing areas where historic resources were recorded during Paducah field work. The black squares indicate where prefabricated dwellings were identified. (Source: Paducah Department of Planning).



Survey Findings

Methodology

Paducah was selected as the focus of fieldwork for this report because of its status as the largest urban and suburban area in the Jackson Purchase. Paducah is located in close proximity to the Sears mill in Cairo, Illinois that produced precut houses. Also within distribution range of Paducah, the prefab manufacturers of Gunnison Homes and National Homes increase the likelihood that prefab examples would be identified. Two events that brought economic growth to Paducah, and therefore heightened the need for worker housing, occurred during the research period between 1900 and 1960. Paducah's first large employer, the Illinois Central Railroad (ICR) Company, constructed the railroad shop's facility in 1927. This expansion was during the period when precut houses were in high demand. Paducah also had undergone rapid growth in the early 1950s with the construction of the AEC plant, which created housing shortages. Again, this time frame coincides with the height of prefab housing development, especially with regard to panelized and sectional types, in the post-World War II era.

In order to find extant prefab resources, The Kentucky Heritage Council's (KHC) Historic Resources Inventory was consulted to confirm whether any prefab houses had been previously surveyed. A total of 42 residential resources associated with the period between 1900 and 1924 were located in the KHC Inventory. From the period between 1925 through 1949, a sum of 193 historic residential resources had been surveyed. Only 15 residential resources dating from the period 1950 and 1974 had been previously identified. For all resources associated with prefab manufacture in the KHC Historic Resources Inventory, only one had been identified as a Gunnison House, located at 354 Forest Circle (MCNP-849). A total of two primarily residential districts from the period between 1900 to 1956 have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Neither of which identify prefabricated resources.

Local histories, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, National Register nominations, historic maps and Section 106 Reports were consulted to trace the history and development of the city. Neighborhoods that were constructed during the research period of 1900 to 1960 were given special consideration for fieldwork. These local areas included Afton, Avondale, Arcadia, California Apartments, Colonial Heights, Forest Hills, and River Oaks.

Neighborhoods located in proximity to the ICR railroad shops, in the vicinity of Kentucky Avenue, were also identified for survey.

In developing the survey for Paducah, project staff consulted with local contacts to aid in the identification of prefab resources. Chris Black, Sharon Poat, Corrine Harber, and David Frost assisted in the survey by helping to locate areas thought to have prefab houses. Additionally, a newspaper article authored by Brian Peach appeared in the *Paducah Sun* announcing the survey project and project staff contact information. This article yielded eight calls from property owners who believed they lived in prefab houses in Paducah. An additional local property owner contacted project staff about a semi-rural resource associated with precut manufacture. These nine local contacts provided information about individual resources as well as neighborhoods where prefabricated housing was located in Paducah. Two of these contacts claimed to have *precut* associated houses while the other seven had houses associated with *panelized* prefab houses. This proportional sample, though small, does represent the historical growth trends in Paducah noted in the 2000 census, with most of the town's older housing constructed in the mid-century and thus reflecting a larger number of panelized prefabs.

From this collected information, areas were mapped for planned fieldwork. A windshield survey was conducted in late February prior to more intensive investigation. Local contact, Chris Black, accompanied project staff on a few trips to areas thought to have prefab houses. This helped to confirm which areas should receive more intensive survey. Some individual resources were also located during this windshield survey. Local contacts were unable to locate the area known as Colonial Heights and Afton. The River Oaks development appeared to contain conventionally constructed houses. The areas of Avondale, Arcadia, California Apartments, Forest Hills, Cornell, and Brookhaven were confirmed to contain prefab resources. Additionally, the 2500-2700 blocks of Madison and the area bounded by HC Mathis Drive, Mildred Street, Oak Grove Cemetery, and Park Avenue were found to contain prefab houses. An area bounded by 13th Street, Reed Avenue, Rudy Avenue, and 14th Street also contained some examples of prefab houses constructed in the 1960s and 1970s.

In March 2006, project staff conducted fieldwork in the areas identified from the windshield survey and local contacts. A total of nine resources were intensively surveyed, including interior investigation and measured drawings. Four additional sites were surveyed, but only from the exterior. In addition, survey in ten neighborhoods containing approximately

50 to 60 prefab houses was also conducted. Though these resources were not intensively surveyed, they yielded information about varying prefab models. A majority of the resources surveyed date from the period between 1950 and 1974. This time frame reflects the era of growth in Paducah spurred by the establishment of the AEC plant during the 1950s.

Precut Property Types

Attempts to survey houses associated with precut manufacturers proved to be somewhat difficult. Precut houses by design appear similar to conventionally constructed residences. There is no one distinguishing characteristics such as materials, architectural details, or building form that can be used to confirm most precut houses from the exterior. Though these characteristics might point the researcher to a particular precut model, it is not enough information to make the conclusion. To positively identify a precut house, more intensive work is required, including interior inspection, taking measurements, and potentially deed research. Though property owners might believe that a house is from a particular manufacturer, intensive documentation is needed to confirm the claim. A total of four resources were identified for their possible association with the precut property type during the fieldwork including two that were identified from local contacts. Additionally, two neighborhoods were surveyed for precut houses.

The first resource (MCNP-945) was a bungalow constructed in 1925 located at 630 West Jefferson. The property owner believed the house was a Sears “*Vallonia*.” The one-story, three-bay house has a brick foundation and a brick veneer exterior. It has a side gable roof covered with asphalt shingles. A first-story porch, typical of bungalows, spans the façade. A gable-front dormer is located above the porch in the unfinished attic space. A frame addition constructed in the 1970s is located on the rear of the house.

Though the floor plan for this house resembles the published Sears *Vallonia*, closer inspection of the property did not yield any confirmed association with this precut model. The basement was examined for stamped lumber on the joists as well as the backside of the basement staircase, but no markers were found. The fenestration pattern on the façade was simi-



This house at 630 West Jefferson (MCNP-945) was originally thought to be a Sears precut house, however, closer inspection revealed that it was not.

lar to the *Vallonia* but it did not exactly match the w/w/d/w (window/window/door/window) pattern found on the Sears model. This property had a w/w/d/w/w organization on the front façade. The detailing on the porch columns also did not match the *Vallonia* scheme. Project staff measured the exterior dimensions of the property and found that these are 28-ft. by 36-ft. These exterior dimensions did not match the *Vallonia's* 26-ft. by 34-ft. footprint. The property owner provided deed records for the property, which confirmed the 1925 construction date. The deed information however did not reveal any association with Sears (or any other precut manufacturer). Project staff checked other prefab manufacturers to see if the Jefferson St. house matched any of these potential models. None of the consulted manufacturers had a model exactly like this resource. Although this property may be associated with another precut manufacturer or local lumber company, the house is not a Sears' *Vallonia*.

The Moody House (MCN-289) is located on Cairo Road outside the urban area of Paducah. The setting is semi-rural, with agricultural land in the vicinity. Constructed in 1938, the house is a one-and-one-half story frame bungalow. The house rests on a concrete and brick foundation. The three-bay house retains its original clapboard siding and has an asphalt shingle side gable roof. A four-columned porch extends the full length of the façade. A triple window gable-front dormer is located above the porch.

Typifying a farmhouse bungalow, the Moody House resembles many precut bungalow styles. Thought to be associated with the



Sears "Vallonia" from the catalogue. There were several differences between MCNP-945 and the Sears model including window patterns, porch detailing, and overall measurements. (Source: Private collection).



This bungalow at 3169 Cairo Road (MCN-289) is located outside of Paducah's city limits.

precut property type, closer inspection did not reveal any evidence to support this conclusion. Rough-cut oak lumber joists located in the basement would seem to indicate that this house is not a precut model. Precision cut, standardized lumber was a hallmark of the precut production method. Project staff measured the exterior dimensions of the property but have not located any matching model in *Houses by Mail*. Despite these findings, the Moody House retains much of its historic fabric and is an excellent example of a rural bungalow.

The bungalow (MCNP-946) located on the southeast corner of Madison and 16th Street in Paducah closely resembles the Sears “*Osborn*” model that is published in *Houses by Mail*.

This house is a one-story, three-bay brick veneered bungalow. It has a gable-front asphalt shingle roof with a cross-gabled porch on the south façade. The unique stucco porch with a flared staircase envelopes the principal east façade. A fluted chimneystack is located on the south façade. The house appears on Sanborn Fire Insurance maps in 1926.

This property could be a Sears precut model identified as an “*Osborn*.” The distinguishing characteristics of the porch details, including the columns and the flared chimneystack, follow the *Osborn* typology. The facade fenestration, however, differs from the original version. This could be a function of the original owner’s customization of the plan. Without local contact information, project staff were unable to gain access to the interior of this property to confirm positively that this house is actually a Sears *Osborn* model. Based on the visual evidence, this house is likely to be an *Osborn* model.

The two-story, three-bay, frame foursquare house (MCNP-947) located at 127 Farley Place may also be associated with the precut property type. This house has an unusual two-story projecting bay on the façade. Sheathed in clapboard siding, the house has a hipped-roof with a cross-gable over the projecting bay. This unique design closely follows the Sears “*Whitehall*” model published in *Houses by Mail*. Project staff were unable to gain access to the interior of this property to confirm positively that this house is actually



Above: Located at Madison and 16th Street, resource (MCNP-946) is located near the ICR railroad shops and may have been built to serve as worker housing. It closely resembles the Sears “*Osborn*” pictured below. The main difference is that the building appears to be reversed in its orientation. Further research and access to the house would confirm whether it is a precut house. (Source: [Houses by Mail](#)).



a Sears *Whitehall* model. Based on visual evidence, the fenestration pattern and the chimney placement do match the model offered in the Sears catalogue suggesting that this house could be a *Whitehall*. Without local contact information, this house could not be measured to positively confirm that it matches the *Whitehall's* actual dimensions.

The area bounded by Kentucky Avenue, 21st Street, M.L. King Jr. Drive and 13th Street, which is located near the ICR railroad shops, was investigated. This area was mentioned in local history sources as an area of ICR worker housing. The other neighborhood, Arcadia, which includes Wallace Lane, Sycamore, and Cedar Lane, was also surveyed. This neighborhood had served as residence for the managers and executives of the ICR railroad shops.³³ Several houses in these neighborhoods resembled precut house property types and were constructed in the 1910s and 1920s. Further detailed research would be required to positively identify these residences as precut property types. Due to the time constraints for this report, further research could not be undertaken. The survey in these neighborhoods illustrates the improbability of identifying this property type from the exterior alone, even with the assistance of field guides, and suggests that a more intensive survey needs to be done to confirm precut status.



Top picture: This house at 127 Farley Place (MCNP-947) closely resembles the Sears "Whitehall." The unusual two-story bay window is a distinguishing characteristic. Access to the interior of the house would help to verify if the floor plan matches the Sears model pictured above. (Source: [Houses by Mail](#)).



Sanborn Map showing the area near the ICR railroad shops. This area contains housing built for the railroad employees some of which maybe precut prefabs. (Source: Sanborn Maps, LLC).

Panelized Property Types

Identifying prefab houses that are associated with the panelized production method can be easier than precut property types. Though, it is important to recognize that not all panelized house manufacturers included distinguishing exterior characteristics on their house models. This is probably a function of some panelized houses conforming to popular architectural standards rather than attempting to “stand-out.” Also prefab manufacturers had a desire to separate from the defense-housing stigma that associated prefabs with cheap, temporary housing during World War II.

In Paducah, several different types of panelized prefabs were identified, including Gunnison Homes and National Homes. Additionally, a potential type of panelized prefab was documented within a larger neighborhood of similar houses, but the specific manufacturer remains unknown. More research will have to be done to uncover whether this housing is in fact associated with a prefab manufacturer.

Based upon our survey results and research done in other areas of the state, panelized prefabs have two different customers. One is the customer who received a catalogue or toured a model house, purchased one, and then placed it in a neighborhood that contained conventionally-built housing. These customers were typically middle-class to upper middle-class and their housing was selected from the higher end of the prefab catalogue. The other customer for panelized prefabs purchased the house from a developer who constructed neighborhoods of prefabs. This customer was typically working class or middle class and the houses were conceived to be “starter homes.” Geographically, this means that most high-end panelized prefabs are found incognito in upper middle class residential subdivisions, while neighborhoods of similar small prefab houses can be found in working and middle class suburbs. In Paducah, both types of panelized prefab customers can be found.

Gunnison Prefabs

Gunnison Homes are probably the easiest to identify since they have easily recognizable details, including sheet metal chimneys and distinctive detailing. In total, five higher-end Gunnison houses were identified in upper middle class residential areas. Two of these properties were intensively surveyed. Three working and middle class neighborhoods of Gunnison houses also received documentation. Within these areas, approximately 100 Gunnison houses received reconnaissance survey and three Gunnison resources were



intensively surveyed. One of the neighborhood developments consisted of a collection of 38 Gunnison duplexes, a type that was unknown to researcher previous to this project. Unfortunately, access to the interiors of these models could not be secured.



The house at 3905 Alben Barkley Drive, historic resource (MCNP-948), shows the main block of this Gunnison house, breezeway, and garage.

Located on the 3905 Alben Barkley Drive, this Gunnison House (MCNP-948) represents the upper middle class consumer. This house is a deluxe type with numerous manufacturer additions. The one-story, eight-bay house has a panelized structure and clapboard siding, and was constructed in the early 1950s. The house sits on a poured concrete foundation and has a basement. The side gable roof has asphalt shingles and two sheet metal vent chimneys. The interior plan is a three bedroom, two bath model. Original additions include a breezeway, a screened porch, a “wind-o-wing” (or a room addition), and a double garage. Additional architectural detailing also adorns the house with the metal porch guardrail, brick chimney, and front door

hood. The homeowner paid extra fees to have these additions for the house. This property retains a significant amount original materials and its original design.

The high-end Gunnison (MCNP-949) surveyed in the 250 Friedman Lane has been altered dramatically and is not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Originally a three-bedroom model, this Gunnison has received two different additions, the floor plan has been reoriented, and most of the historic fabric has been removed. The exterior has lost its Gunnison appearance making it unrecognizable as a panelized prefab.



This Gunnison house at 250 Friedman Lane (MCNP-949) has been greatly altered resulting in a loss of integrity.

Two high end Gunnison houses on Minerva Place and one on 38th Street were identified through windshield survey. Both properties on Minerva (MCNP-950 and MCNP-951) had some degree of alteration, including changes in form and materials. The 315 38th Street Gunnison (MCNP-952) was originally owned by local Gunnison dealer Jack Rottering and was used as a model home. Attempts to gain access to this house were unsuccessful. This house was constructed with a breezeway and single-car garage as well as a brick chimney and



front door hood. It appears to have retained its original materials and form.

As noted previously, developers constructed neighborhoods of panelized prefabs for purchase by working and middle class families. These houses were typically basic models with two-to-three bedrooms and no customization from the manufacturer. Due to the influx of workers for the AEC plant and its allied industries around Paducah in the mid-1950s, there are several neighborhoods of panelized prefab housing. Panelized prefab neighborhoods developed primarily with Gunnison houses are described below.

In the neighborhood bounded by HC Mathis Drive, Mildred Street, Oak Grove Cemetery and Park Avenue, several Gunnison houses were identified. The Kentucky Mortgage Company developed the area with three-bedroom Gunnison Homes for workers in the chemical industries. Many have some degree of alteration but still retain an adequate amount of integrity to convey their historic association as prefab housing. The neighborhood has rear service alleys to access the houses and garages added later in the mid-1950s.



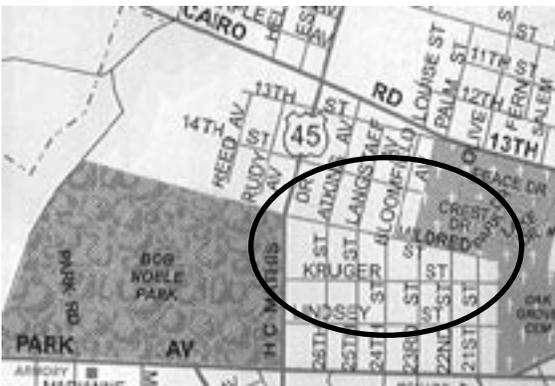
634 Minerva Place (MCNP-950) has had some changes over time making it virtually unrecognizable as a Gunnison. The sheet metal chimney is intact..



This Gunnison at 505 Minerva Place (MCNP-951) has had its original windows replaced with non-historic windows.



At 315 38th Street (MCNP-952) has retained much of its historic fabric. This house served as a model house for Gunnison dealer, Jack Rottering.



Map showing area developed by the Kentucky Mortgage Company. Photo showing some of the Gunnison houses in the neighborhood along Park Avenue. (Source: Engels Maps, Inc., "Paducah").



Pictured above: This Gunnison house at 936 N. 26th Street (MCNP-953) has had some alteration to its original materials and design. Pictured below: This registration plate was found in the utility room of this Gunnison house.

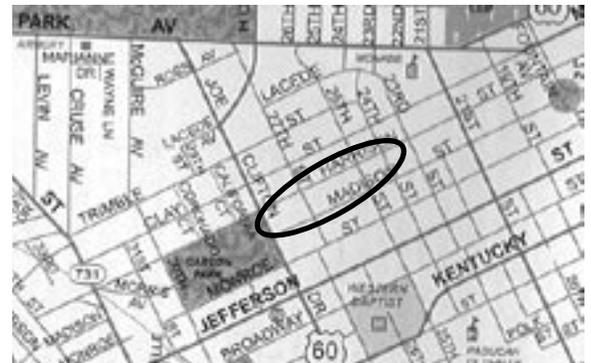


Gunnison metal registration plate is intact in the utility room. While the basic form of the house is intact, changes in materials have altered the original appearance of this house.

The 2500-2700 blocks of Madison Street is another area that contains a collection of Gunnison Houses. Approximately 50 houses are located within this neighborhood thought to have been originally owned by the Tennessee Valley Authority and developed as worker housing for the AEC plant. There are rear service alleys to access the houses and garages. Project staff intensively surveyed two houses in the 2500 block. Most of the Gunnisons in this neighborhood have had some alterations to original materials, though many have retained their original design to express their historic association with prefabricated housing.

Both houses (MCNP-954) and (MCNP-955) are one-story four-bay panelized dwellings, located directly next door to one another. The houses have side-gable roofs and single sheet metal chimney vents and are constructed on concrete slab foundations. These houses are three bedrooms and one bath models. Gunnison metal registration plates are located in the respective utility rooms. Located

Within the 900 block of North 26th Street, located within the Kentucky Mortgage Company subdivision, project staff was able to intensively survey a Gunnison house constructed in 1951. The one-story, five-bay panelized Gunnison (MCNP-953) has aluminum siding. The house is on a concrete slab foundation. The side gable roof is sheathed with asphalt shingles and surmounted with a sheet metal chimney vent. A cross-gable porch and replacement vinyl windows were added in 2001. The interior has three bedrooms and one bath. The



Map illustrating the area containing the Madison Street Gunnison neighborhood. (Source: Engels Maps, Inc., "Paducah"). Photo above: Gunnison houses located along Madison Street.

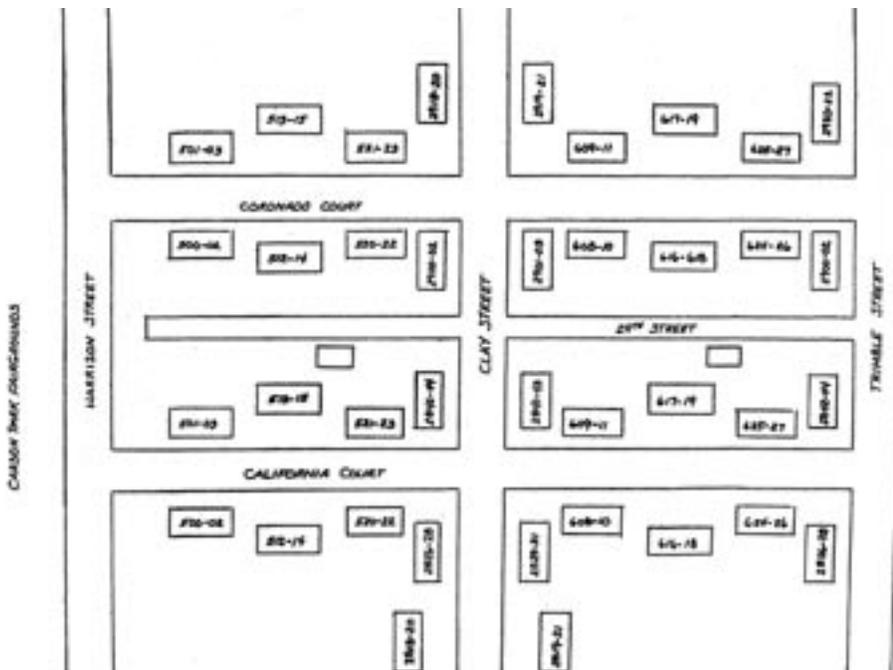
at 2536 Madison Street, this Gunnison (MCNP-954) was constructed in 1951 and originally had asbestos-cement shingles for exterior sheathing, which has been replaced with aluminum siding. The house retains its original windows and the interior panels and trim are left unaltered. The Gunnison at 2540 Madison Street (MCNP-955) was constructed in 1952 and retains its original asbestos-cement shingles for exterior sheathing. The rest of the house also retains its original windows and the interior panels and trim are left unaltered. This particular house features an original picture window in the living room. The metal registration plate is also intact in the utility room. Both of these historic resources have retained their original form and a majority of their historic materials are intact.



This Gunnison at 3536 Madison Street (MCNP-954) has retained much of its historic fabric including the original steel windows. Shown from the rear elevation.



Located at 2540 Madison Street, this historic resource (MCNP-955) has had very few changes over time and still has its original siding.



Map illustrating the site plan of the Clayton Park Apartments (MCNP-956) featured on the following page. There are thirty-eight buildings that are Gunnison duplexes. (Source: Heather Wyatt).

The Clayton Park Apartments (MCNP-956) located in the 2900 block of Clay Street, which also includes California Court and Coronado Court are Gunnison duplexes. Originally developed as the California Apartments in response to the housing shortage caused by the AEC plant, 38 Gunnison duplexes were built. Most are two-bedroom models but there are 12 three-bedroom models in the complex. The duplexes are one-story, four-bay panelized Gunnison models. The exterior sheathing is a combination of asbestos-cement shingles and vinyl siding. The side-gable roof has asphalt shingles and two sheet metal chimney vents. Each unit has a large wood-framed picture window that appears to be original. The units are arranged to create rear courtyards. Access to the interior of these models was not achieved. Overall, the entire development appears to have retained much of its original appearance in design and materials. There have been no inappropriate additions or dramatic changes in materials to dramatically impact the historic appearance of these duplexes.



The Clayton Park Apartments in the 2900 block of Clay Street (MCNP-956), formerly named the California Apartments, retain much of their historic fabric including windows, sheet metal chimneys, and building footprints.



National Homes

Two working and middle class neighborhoods were identified in Paducah associated with National Homes. The Cornell Development and Brookhaven, which are located next to each other, both contain a large assembly of National Homes from the “Thrift” line. Located in south end of Paducah off Old Mayfield Road, these neighborhoods were constructed in the early 1950s for AEC plant employees. A local informant could be found for the Cornell development, less is known about the Brookhaven neighborhood.

The Cornell development features four different National Homes models, which are single-story panelized prefab houses. According to local informants, the developers of the neighborhood limited the number of models that could be selected by the house buyer and stipulated that they must be National Homes. As expected, some alterations to materials and form have occurred since they were originally constructed. Despite these changes, the



Inset Map: Showing the area that contains both the Cornell Neighborhood and Brookhaven Neighborhood. (Source: Engels Maps, Inc., “Paducah,”).

Photo right: National Houses in the Brookhaven Neighborhood. Several different “Thrift” models are evident.



Photo right: National Houses in the Cornell Neighborhood. The house on the corner still has exposed panels.

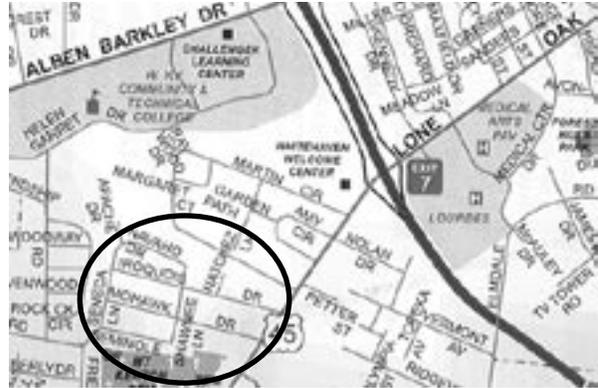


neighborhood as a whole conveys an historic association with postwar prefab neighborhoods of the 1950s.

One house in the 3000 block of Old Mayfield Road (MCNP-957) of the Cornell Development was accessible for intensive survey by project staff. This is a one-story four-bay National Homes *Fenton* model, panelized house constructed in 1952 for \$7600. A registration plate on the interior positively identified the house as a National Home with the serial number 39846. It has a side-gable asphalt shingle roof with a single sheet metal chimney vent. Projecting from the front façade, a cross-gabled porch was added in 1977. Side and rear frame additions were also added during this period. The original windows, including a wood framed picture window and asbestos cement siding have been retained. Original interior fabric, such as panels and battens, remain in place.



Picture above left: The National House in the 3000 block of Old Mayfield Road (MCNP-957) soon after the prefab was built. (Source: Private collection). Picture above right: The house as it is in March 2006. Some alterations have been made including the addition to the left and the cross-gabled porch. Picture left: The original registration plate for the house found in the utility room.



Another neighborhood on Lone Oak Road was also surveyed for prefab housing. Mohawk Drive, Iroquois Drive, Seneca Lane, and Shawnee Lane define the area. Residences in this development appear to be associated with panelized prefab manufacture and may be associated with National Homes. Five different single-story models (MCNP-958 through MCNP-962) were observed. The houses have poured concrete foundations and are sheathed with a variety of siding materials. Interior investigation was not conducted because there were no local contacts in this neighborhood.



Left: 181 Mohawk Drive (MCNP-958)



Right: 159 Mohawk Drive (MCNP-959)



Left: 153 Mohawk Drive (MCNP-960)



Right: 154 Mohawk Drive (MCNP-961)

Inset map: Illustrates the neighborhood located off Lone Oak Road. (Source: Engels Maps, Inc., "Paducah"). Photos: These houses are located in the neighborhood containing Mohawk Drive. There were five different houses identified thought to be National Homes.



Right: 171 Mohawk Drive (MCNP-962)



Other Prefabs

The Forest Hills neighborhood also contains unidentified prefab houses. Constructed in the early 1950s for AEC plant housing and funded by FHA loans, four different types of houses were built. The development is now owned by the city of Paducah and the houses are rented. One house in the neighborhood was surveyed for this study, though the manufacturer has not been identified. The house at 1041 Elmdale Road (MCNP-963) is located in the Forest Hills neighborhood. It is a one-story, three-bay dwelling with an overall footprint of 25' by 30'. The house is situated on a concrete slab foundation. Originally sheathed with clapboard siding, the house's exterior has been replaced with vinyl siding. This house is a two-bedroom, one bath model. There was no registration plate located in the interior to signify the company that manufactured these houses. More research needs to be done to ascertain whether this neighborhood was developed with tract housing or with a particular type of panelized prefab.



Inset Map: Shows the area containing the Forest Hills neighborhood. (Source: Engels Maps, Inc., "Paducah").
 Photo above: The rear yards of the Forest Hills neighborhood are shared creating a communal green space.
 Photo left: Resource (MCNP-963) at 1041 Elmdale Road. At this time the prefab manufacturer for this house has not been identified.



Other prefab houses were identified in the project area that are associated with African American history. In particular, an entire African American neighborhood containing some prefabs, surrounding the former West Kentucky Industrial College (WKIC), was discovered by project staff, thanks to local historian Corrine Harber. This neighborhood, bounded by North 13th Street, Reed Avenue, Rudy Avenue, and 14th Street, was developed by WKIC professors at the college and professional/trades people, such as brick masons and architects with a mix of self-built homes and prefab dwellings in the 1960s and 1970s. According to Ms. Harber, prefab housing was a preferred housing option for black Paducah residents because of difficulty obtaining traditional mortgages at good rates, due to discriminatory lending practices and redlining. Prefab houses, on the other hand, could be purchased from a manufacturer who did not necessarily know the buyer's race. In turn, these structures were placed in traditional African American neighborhoods. Though these houses were built significantly later than the end date of this study in 1960, they do provide illuminating information about how prefabricated housing might have been used in minority communities.

The Harber house (MCNP-964) at 1353 Rudy Avenue is a prefab house constructed in 1966 by Johnny and Corrine Harber. The Harbers selected the house out of a catalogue and had it delivered to the house site, complete with windows and doors installed. Mr. Harber, who was a brick mason trained at the local college, completed the house with a brick veneer shortly thereafter. This one-story ranch house cost \$11,000, a hefty sum for the mid-1960s. Ms Harber was not sure which manufacturer prefabricated the house; however, she did note that this type of housing was preferred in the community, due to lending practices and the great pool of skilled craftspeople able to assist with finishing off the prefab house.

One additional house located in this neighborhood at 2315 13th Street off of HC Mathis was surveyed for this project that was outside the study time frame of 1900 to 1960. The house (MCNP-965) was constructed in 1970 as a prefab model house for the African American community leader W.C. Young. Local developer Martin Conrad constructed the house. The prefab manufacturer is unidentified but the house resembles models offered by



Map showing the neighborhood associated with WKIC professors and trades people. The area is bounded by Noble Park and Rowlandtown. (Source: Engels Maps, Inc., "Paducah").



The original owners of this prefab house at 1353 Rudy Avenue, (MCNP-964) added the carport and brick veneer after its initial construction.





Historic resource (MCNP-965) at 2315 13th street is associated with African American history and prefab housing. This model house has three bedrooms. A rear addition was constructed in 2005.

National Homes and Capp Homes during this later post-1960 period. It is a Colonial Revival-styled tri-level house. Brick veneer is used on the first story while the upper story is clad in wood siding. The main block of the house has three bays and two-story, four columned porch. A two-car garage extends out from the main block on the west side. On the east side, a single-story wing extends from the main block with a projecting bay window.

Sectional Property Types

No sectional property types were identified in Paducah during the course of this fieldwork.

Preassembled Property Types

No preassembled property types were identified in Paducah during the course of this fieldwork.

Integrity Evaluations of Panelized Resources

The field work conducted for this study yielded sufficient data to allow *panelized* prefab houses to be evaluated for integrity. A number of neighborhoods containing panelized prefabs were documented to provide for a good comparative baseline. As determined at the beginning of this section, integrity of **design**, **materials**, and **workmanship** are essential for the eligibility of panelized prefab houses.

These resources are being evaluated under Criterion A for their association with the growth and development of Paducah neighborhoods in the mid-twentieth century. Keep in mind that these resources could also be eligible under other historic contexts. The following text will give the researcher model integrity evaluations.

Comparing two Gunnison houses that were built by individual customers allows an examination of integrity considerations when dealing with panelized prefab houses. Historic resource at 3905 Alben Barkley Drive (MCNP-948) has retained a high level of integrity of **design**. Reflecting the manufacturer's original design intentions, this Gunnison "Deluxe" house has retained its original form. Many of the options that were available from Gunnison also remain intact. The house also retains a high level of integrity of **materials**. The original

steel windows are intact. The optional details including shutters, railings, and fireplace remain with the house. Though the house is sheathed in aluminum siding, this material is not out of character with original cladding materials and does not cover important architectural details. Integrity of **workmanship** is evident on the interior of the house with visible seams that distinguish the panels. The breezeway also illustrates the production methods of panelized prefabs with removable panels that open the space as weather permits. Based on these integrity considerations, this historic resource would be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

By comparison, the Gunnison house at 250 Friedman Lane (MCNP-949) has lost a significant amount of historic fabric and does not meet the established integrity considerations. The loss of **design** integrity results in the large addition located on the side of the house and the complete alteration to the original floor plan. Additionally, the window openings were enlarged and the entrance was altered. Loss of **materials** also has impacted integrity. The original steel windows were removed and replaced with non-historic windows. The sheet metal chimney, original breezeway, and fireplace, distinctive manufacturer's additions, have been removed. The loss of **workmanship** is also evident since there is no visible evidence of the original modular panels. This house would not be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

A comparison of historic resources located in a developer neighborhood of Gunnison houses also helps to see how integrity considerations are applied. The house (MCNP-955) located 2540 Madison Street has retained a high level of integrity of **design**. The original form of the house remains intact. There have been no additions or alterations that have changed the original design intention of the manufacturer. A high level



3905 Alben Barkley Drive (MCNP-948).



250 Friedman Lane (MCNP-949).



2540 Madison Street (MCNP-955).



of integrity of **materials** has also been retained. The original asbestos shingles applied by the owners remain in place. The steel windows and large picture window that was included with this Gunnison model are intact. The integrity of **workmanship** is less evident on the exterior, but on the interior the plywood panels are clearly delineated by the joint seams at regular intervals. Integrity of **location** is intact since the house remains on its original site. Also integrity of **setting** is underscored by the surrounding neighborhood of Gunnison houses that remain conveying that the neighborhood was developed by a single individual for worker housing. Based on these integrity considerations this resource would meet the registration requirements for prefab houses.

The Gunnison house (MCNP-953) at 936 N. 26th Street is also located in a developer neighborhood. This resource has experienced some alteration that has had an impact on in-



936 N. 26th Street (MCNP-953).

tegrity. While the basic form of the house has not been changed, the addition of the cross-gabled porch has changed the original appearance of this modest house. Non-historic shutters have been added which were not originally included with the house but the interior floor plan is intact. The integrity of **design**, therefore, is at a moderate level. The integrity of **materials** has been most significantly impacted. The original casement windows have been replaced with six-over-six vinyl sash windows. Vinyl siding was also added, replacing the original cladding materials on the exterior. Though, the original manufacturer's sheet metal chimney is still in place. For integrity of **workmanship**, evidence of the original panels has been diminished. On the interior, the plywood panels have been covered with wallpaper concealing the joint seams. The house has not been moved and has retained integrity of **location**. The integrity of **setting** also remains intact since the Gunnison houses in the neighborhood remain relatively unchanged. This house would probably not individually meet the integrity considerations for prefab houses, however, when considered in a district this house might be a contributing resource.

Summary

The survey of prefabricated resources in Paducah located in McCracken County revealed several National Register of Historic Places eligible historic properties. Local historic contexts identified for the significance of prefabricated housing related to the development of worker housing associated with industrial growth, African American self-built suburbs associated with ethnic history, and architecture that embodies distinctive characteristics of a prefab type. Many resources retain medium to high levels of integrity to convey historic significance. No precut property types were definitively identified during this fieldwork. If further intensive level survey could be conducted, potentially eligible resource might be identified. The two historic resources that could be potentially eligible as precut property types are (MCNP-946) at the corner of Madison and 16th Street and (MCNP-947) located at 127 Farley Place. This would depend on the determination that they are associated with a kit-house manufacturer. These resources would be considered within a context for a Criterion C nomination such as “Sears Houses in Paducah, Kentucky, 1900 to 1940,” in the area of architecture.

For the prefabricated worker housing, a property or district could be nominated under Criterion A within a context such as “Residential Housing for the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant in Paducah Kentucky, 1950 to 1955” with significance in the area of industry. Resources that could be considered within this context include the California Apartments (MCNP-956), the neighborhood within the 2500 to 2700 block of Madison including resources (MCNP-954) and (MCNP-955), and the Cornell Neighborhood including resource (MCNP-957). These districts all retain at moderate to high levels of integrity. The Forest Hills neighborhood including resource (MCNP-964) might also be eligible within this context; however, more information about the development of this area would be needed.

Prefabricated housing associated within a neighborhood that also had conventional housing was also found to have an historic context under Criterion A. The self-built African American neighborhood near Rowlandtown including resources (MCNP-965) and (MCNP-966) could be eligible within the context of “Self-built Residential Housing for African Americans in Paducah Kentucky, 1900 to 1970,” in the area of ethnic history. The neighborhood is also associated with the West Kentucky Industrial College since many residents were professors or graduates of the college. This context would have to demonstrate exceptional significance of these resources, since they are currently less than fifty years old. Please see

the National Register's guidance on Criterion Consideration G for more information a at http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15_7.htm#crit%20con%20g.

For resources eligible under Criterion C, a context could be developed in the area of architecture. For example, the Gunnison House (MCNP-948) located on Alben Barkley Road is eligible within the context "Gunnison Houses in Paducah, Kentucky 1945 to 1955." This house represents a deluxe Gunnison model and exhibits nearly all of the manufacturer's additions and detailing. This house embodies the distinctive architectural characteristics that define a Gunnison House. The Gunnison house located on 38th Street (MCNP-952) could also be eligible when evaluated within this context since it was a dealer's model home. Historic resource (MCNP-955) at 2540 Madison Street embodies the characteristics of a Gunnison "starter home," which was compact in size and included details like picture windows and exposed interior marine plywood panels. These resources retain high levels of integrity to convey their significance. Some resources evaluated within this context, however, would not be eligible. The altered Gunnison in the 200 block of Friedman Lane (MCNP-949) has had a dramatic loss of integrity. The two Gunnison's located on Minerva Lane (MCNP-950) and (MCNP-951) have also lost integrity making them ineligible within the context. The Gunnison located on North 26th Street (MCNP-953) is also ineligible within this context because of replacement windows and siding . This house might be eligible within a Criterion A context for the neighborhood, however, further research about the neighborhood would be required to identify the significance.

Marshall County

Marshall County became Kentucky's 92nd county in 1842 and is named for John Marshall, a chief justice of the United States Supreme Court. Livingston, Lyon, Trigg, Calloway, Graves and McCracken counties, as well as the "Land Between the Lakes" recreation area, surround the county. Located in the eastern portion of the Jackson Purchase, the terrain of the county varies from gently rolling hills to level wooded areas and bottomlands. Much of the bottomland on the eastern border of the county along the Tennessee River was flooded by waters from Kentucky Lake created by the construction of the TVA Kentucky Dam.³⁴

Until the period after World War II, Marshall County's economic base was almost entirely agricultural. Crops included corn, tobacco, soybeans, and livestock. During the 1930s, the county became a major strawberry producing area, with Benton serving as the distribution center for the industry. Once the Kentucky Dam was built, a tourism and recreation industry developed which contributed to the county's economy.³⁵

Benton was established as the county seat of Marshall County in 1842. Named after Thomas Hart Benton, a senator from Missouri, the town was platted on tracts of land that belonged to Francis Clayton and James Bearden. Platted by Philander Palmer in 1842, Benton was incorporated in 1845. Three Additions, Barry's Addition, Cole's Addition and Myers Addition, were annexed into the city limits in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.³⁶

Benton is sited on a series of seven hills, just to the east and north of rich farmlands along Clark's River. Benton was a small community of just over one hundred inhabitants during the mid-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Marshall County's economy during the nineteenth century relied primarily on agricultural products. Benton did not have any major industries.³⁷

In 1890, the Paducah, Tennessee and Alabama Railroad was constructed and ran within one-half mile of Benton's courthouse. The railroad line eventually became part of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. The construction of this rail line in close proximity to Benton stimulated the town's economy and spurred industrial growth, earning the town



1959 General Highway Map of Marshall County. (Source: Kentucky Department of Highways, Division of Planning).

the moniker “Trade Center of the County.”³⁸ By the beginning of the twentieth century, Benton had three churches, four dry goods stores, a hotel, and a bank. Local industries had also developed due to the railroad including a carding factory, lumber mill, and flourmill.³⁹



Courthouse Square and surrounding neighborhoods of Benton, county seat of Marshall County. (Source: [History of Marshall County, Kentucky](#)).

During the early twentieth century, the city grew to over 1,000 residents. A series of civic improvements, including a new high school and a courthouse, were constructed during the 1910s. In 1922, Benton attempted to acquire the State Teacher’s College, but lost the bid to Murray. The city of Benton built a waterworks and sewer system in 1930.⁴⁰

Throughout the first three decades of the twentieth century, Benton remained a small county seat with a few thousand residents. While the county remained primarily rural in character, Benton served as the governmental and commercial center. New buildings were constructed on the courthouse square such as the Crawford-Ferguson Department Store, Stow Drug Company, and Draffen Motor Company. Small industries like Treas Lumber Company and the Benton Hosiery Mill provided employment in the community.⁴¹ In the 1910s and 1920s, new Bungalow style dwellings replaced many of Benton’s older housing stock within the town limits.⁴²

By the 1930s, the Louisville and Nashville Railroad ended service to Benton and the tracks and depot were removed. Business slowed during the Depression years, with little new construction occurring in this period. During World War II, some residents found employment in war industries outside of Marshall County, such as the Kentucky Ordnance Works at Paducah. Though the early 1950s spurred some growth and prosperity in Benton, there was not a great demand for new housing.⁴³ Currently, Benton has a population of approximately 4,000 residents.

Calvert City is Marshall County's second most populated community. Named for Potilla Calvert, Calvert City was established in 1860. Calvert's home "Oak Hill" and surrounding property became the original part of the town. Part of this land was developed for railroad lines which became the main transportation route for the community. The town grew at first as a railroad community with businesses establishing near the rail line. The community boomed in the post-World War II



Calvert City Heights neighborhood was developed for an anticipated population boom that never really occurred. (Source: [History of Marshall County, Kentucky](#)).

period due to the construction of the Kentucky Dam and the Paducah AEC plant.⁴⁴

Soon, numerous chemical plants and allied industries located near the outskirts of Calvert City and the banks of the Tennessee River. Pennsalt was the first chemical company to establish its industrial enterprise near Calvert City. A dozen companies invested more than a billion dollars into the development of Calvert City's chemical plants.⁴⁵

Calvert City incorporated in 1951 as a result of the new growth created by the chemical industries. The population reached 1,225 within the city limits in 1953. The Local Planning Commission at the time projected that the population would grow to 14,000 by 1960. In anticipation of the population boom, planners calculated that the city would need new housing stock since only 408 residences were in the city limits at the time. City planners also determined that 160 housing units would be needed immediately. The area known as "Calvert City Heights" soon developed in response to this housing shortage. The population boom in Calvert City never materialized. Consequently, the need for new housing stock vanished. Most residents in surrounding counties chose to commute to their jobs in Calvert City.⁴⁶ The current population is approximately 2,700 residents and 1,100 households.⁴⁷

The TVA began construction of the Kentucky Dam located in Marshall County in 1938 to generate cheap hydroelectric power for the region and to prevent disastrous floods like the one that occurred in 1937. Completed in 1944, the new dam spurred economic development

in the Jackson Purchase region. In the 1960s, the eastern section of Marshall County was inundated along the Tennessee River and became a part of Kentucky Lake. The lake and the area surrounding developed as a tourist destination for water sports recreation. New vacation homes, motels, and restaurants soon dotted the area. The Kentucky Dam Village State Resort Park was constructed to take advantage of the recreational opportunities offered at the lake.⁴⁸

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Marshall County's pre-1939 housing stock contained 803 units or 5.5% of its total residential inventory. For the period encompassing 1940 to 1959, the total amount of housing units represented is 2,394 or 16.3% of the county's total housing stock.⁴⁹ The gains in housing that occurred during this period related to the county's growing industrial base in Calvert City.



The Kentucky Dam photographed in March 2006 was constructed by the Tennessee Valley Authority to help prevent flooding and generate power for the region.

Survey Findings

Methodology

Marshall County was selected as the focus of fieldwork for this report because it is considered representative of the rural, agricultural counties in the Jackson Purchase. The county was also selected because very little survey work had been done in the past. Additionally, towns in Marshall County were located in close proximity to the Sears mill in Cairo, Illinois that produced precut houses, and within distribution range of prefab companies like Gunnison Homes and National Homes. This increased the likelihood of discovering prefabricated housing stock in the county. The construction of the TVA Kentucky Dam on the Tennessee River created the possibility that TVA sectional housing might be located in the county.

The Kentucky Heritage Council's (KHC) Historic Resources Inventory was consulted to confirm whether any prefab houses had been previously surveyed. One residential resource associated with the period between 1900 and 1924 was located in the KHC Inventory for Marshall County. This resource (MLB-2), known as the Stilley House, is Marshall County's only residential property listed on the National Register of Historic Places for the period between 1900 through 1956. From the period between 1925 and 1949, no historic residential resources had been surveyed in the county. There were also no resources dating from the period 1950 to 1974 that had been previously identified. Not a single resource associated with prefab manufacture was represented in the KHC Historic Resources Inventory for Marshall County.

Local histories, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, historic maps, and Cultural Historic Resource Reports were consulted to trace the history and development of the city. Neighborhoods that were constructed during the research period of 1900 to 1960 were given special consideration for fieldwork. Local history sources indicated that Benton underwent a period of residential construction during the 1910s and 1920s. The possibility that precut property types could have been constructed in the county seat of Benton underscored the need for survey. The neighborhood of Calvert City Heights located in Calvert City was also identified for its possible association with prefab house. Constructed in the 1950s, there was a possibility that panelized or sectional property types would be located.



Attempts by project staff to establish local contacts to aid in the identification of prefab resources proved fruitless. Calls were made to the local historical society, the library, and the chamber of commerce in an attempt to find possible local informants. No one, however, could recommend a local source at these organizations. A press release was published in the *Tribune-Courier* announcing the survey project and project staff contact information. This article yielded no calls from property owners in Marshall County who might have prefab houses.

From the collected archival information, areas were mapped for planned fieldwork. By using a base map, project staff conducted a combination of windshield survey and even walked through areas that had the potential for prefab housing. Since no local contacts could be made, and because these contacts are vital to gaining access to properties, none of the resources were able to be intensively surveyed.

In March 2006, project staff conducted reconnaissance level fieldwork in the areas identified for the potential of prefab property types. A total of thirteen residential resources were surveyed in Benton. Of these resources, five (MLB-34 through MLB-38) appeared



Map of Benton in 1969. Survey for prefab houses was conducted using these boundaries. (Source: Kentucky Department of Highways, Division of Planning).



Above left: 108 14th Street (MLB-34). Above right: 200 14th Street (MLB-35). These houses may be panelized prefabs. They are small in form and have sheet metal chimneys.



to be associated with panelized prefab property types. The manufacturer of these houses remains unknown, though the resources bear a close resemblance to National Homes. Interior investigation would be required to verify floor plans and to find the metal registration plate. Located together along east Fourteenth Street, these prefab houses appear to have been constructed during the 1950s. Each house had slightly different roof forms and façade treatments. Only two still retained the sheet metal chimney vents. All five of the houses have been altered to some degree with vinyl siding as well as additions.



Above left: 204 14th Street (MLB-36). Above right: 208 14th Street (MLB-37). At right: 302 14th (MLB-38). These houses are on the same street as (MLB-34) and (MLB-35). They may have been constructed as worker housing. Further research might reveal which prefab company produced these houses.



Eight resources were identified as potential precut property types (MLB-39 through MLB-46). None of these resources, however, could be positively identified with a particular precut model in field guides like *Houses by Mail*, Gordon-Van Tine's *117 House Designs of the Twenties*, and *Aladdin "Built in a Day" House Catalog, 1917*, due to lack of interior access. These houses appear to date from the 1910 to 1940 period, which was associated with precut house distribution. All of these houses were of frame construction with clapboard siding. One of the resources, a frame, clapboard-sided, front gabled house (MLB-39) was a bungalow-style duplex model. The rest of the seven houses (MLB-40 through MLB-46) were single-family

residences. All were frame construction with either clapboard or asbestos shingle siding. Five of the resources were bungalow-style and two were Tudor Revival influenced. Further research with the assistance of local contacts would be required to confirm whether these resources are an example of precut property types.



Top left: 1053 Elm Street (MLB-39). Top right: 1077 Birch Street (MLB-40). Middle left: 305 10th Street (MLB-41). Middle right: 812 Poplar Street (MLB-42). Bottom left: 104 Poplar Street (MLB-43). Bottom right: 203 12th Street (MLB-44). All of these historic resources were located in Benton near the Courthouse Square. These houses reflect the popular architectural styles of the 1920s and 1930 that precut manufacturers offered. More intensive research would reveal whether any of these resources are precut prefabs.





Top left: 407 12th Street (MLB-45). Top right: 203 9th Street (MLB-46). Both of these historic resources were located on the outskirts of Benton's central business district. These houses may be pre-cut prefabs because of their similarity to houses offered in mail order catalogues.



Map illustrating the town boundaries of Calvert City in 1957. The area in the lower right quadrant with the grid layout of roads is Calvert City Heights. (Source: Kentucky Department of Economic Development.)

In Calvert City, one resource (ML-3) was identified that could be an example of a precut property type. This single-story, three-bay frame house with a clipped, side-gabled roof and clap-board siding is located at 24 Aspen Street. A distinctive brick chimney is on the façade to the left of the arched entrance. A shed addition is located on the rear of the house. This house shares similar characteristics to precut models offered in the catalogues. Project staff were unable to gain access to the interior to record the floor plan or inspect for stamped lumber. At this point, the house cannot be positively identified with a specific precut manufacturer.



Historic resource (ML-3) is located at 24 Aspen Street in the oldest part of Calvert City. This house may be a precut prefab.

The windshield survey of Calvert City Heights indicated that there might be some panelized prefab houses (ML-4 through ML-6) within the neighborhood. All of these resources have had some level of alteration that has impacted integrity. These resources might be associated with National Homes but interior access would be needed to verify the presence of



Left: 662 Elder Street (ML-4). Bottom left: 613 Cypress Street (ML-5). Bottom right: 619 Elm Street (ML-6). Located in Calvert City Heights, these houses may be panelized pre-fabs. They are similar to some of the National Homes seen in Paducah. Further investigation on the interior might reveal their association.



registration plates. Many houses in Calvert City Heights, however, appear to have been constructed by conventional methods. Perhaps this is related to the reduced need for housing once it was realized there would be no large influx of residents associated with the chemical industries in Calvert City. Since there was not an urgent need for housing, more time was available to construct residences conventionally. Though this area was not intensively surveyed, a few representative panelized prefabs were located and were located in a reconnaissance survey.

Sectional Property Types

Some remaining examples of TVA-associated resources (ML-7) were identified on the property of Kentucky Dam Village State Resort Park. The TVA developed a method for constructing prefab houses in sections. These sections made houses easy to construct once at the site and they could be disassembled and moved to new sites easily. These houses are now used as residences for park employees but were originally used for worker housing during the construction of the Kentucky Dam. Moved to the park site, these resources have been altered with additions, replacement windows and siding significantly impacting their historic integrity. In order to be consider eligibility for the NRHP, these resources would need to be evaluated under the standards outlined by Criterion Consideration “B,” which addresses historic resources that have been moved. The National Register’s guidance on Criterion Consideration B can be found online at http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15_7.htm#crit%20con%20b.

Preassembled Property Types

No preassembled property types were identified in Marshall County during the course of this fieldwork.



Above: Original Tennessee Valley Authority House used at the Kentucky Dam construction site. (Source: Kentucky Dam Interpretive Center).



Above: This is one of the original Tennessee Valley Authority Houses used at the Kentucky Dam construction site today. It is now a residence for park employees at the Kentucky Dam Village.

Summary

The evaluation of NRHP eligibility for prefab resources in Marshall County remains very provisional at this time. Historic contexts should be developed in the future to aid in evaluation and determine eligibility. At this time, no pre-cut property types were definitively identified during this reconnaissance level survey. If further intensive level survey could be conducted, potentially eligible resource might be identified. The relatively small number of panelized prefab houses are of unclear significance at this time. They could be related to worker housing for some of the surrounding industries in Marshall County. Even if an historic context was developed for some of these resources, they would not retain sufficient historic fabric for integrity. For example, the group of prefab houses in Benton (MLB-34 through MLB-38) has been altered with new additions and replacement windows making the original house unrecognizable. Even though a historic context can be identified for the Tennessee Valley Authority sectional houses, the integrity considerations make some of these resources ineligible for the NRHP, some of the TVA sectional houses at the Kentucky Dam Village have had numerous additions and have been moved.

Conclusion

The results of the survey in these two case study counties illustrate the difficulty in identifying prefabricated houses in the field. Without inside knowledge about a particular area from local contacts, it is challenging to positively document prefab houses. For most prefabricated property types, the effort to “blend in” with conventionally constructed houses was successful. The result of this assimilation makes field identification problematic without interior.

In some cases, however, prefabricated housing can be identified in the field without detailed research. This is especially the case with Gunnison houses and somewhat with National houses (and of course Lustrons though none were identified in these two counties). Prefabs associated with these companies often have distinct signature characteristics that make identification easier. Perhaps as more research is accomplished in this area of domestic architectural history, it will become easier to identify prefab resources.

In terms of evaluation for prefabricated housing, the association with a particular historic context is essential to justify eligibility. Individual prefabs or districts of prefabs should establish significance through local, state, or national contexts related to certain historic events



or a type of architectural design. For prefabricated houses potential contexts could be related to local industrial development, community growth and new types of suburban development, or as example of a particular architectural design. Prefabricated houses, like any dwelling, are subject to alterations that impact integrity. Comparing these prefab resources with others of a similar period and design is important to assess levels of integrity. Character-defining attributes defined by integrity of design, materials, workmanship, location, feeling, and association should be present to convey the historic significance of prefabricated housing.

Endnotes

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- ⁸ Philip Thomason, "Cultural Resource Survey and National Register Assessment C140 Complex Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant McCracken County, Kentucky," p. 1.
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- ²⁹ William Ray Mofield, "The Atomic Age Comes to Paducah," p. 23.
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